(b) whether it is fact that Government of India has consented upon to implement it from 1st January, 2006 while on the country Pakistan is making unnecessary delay in its implementation; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH):

(a) to (c) All the seven Member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), namely, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have ratified the Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). The Member States, namely, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka have conveyed the instrument of ratification to the SAARC Secretariat. The Government of India is in the process of sending the instrument of ratification after completing necessary formalities. As per the information received from **the SAARC** Secretariat, Pakistan has ratified the SAFTA Agreement on 15th February 2006 with retrospective effect from 1st January, 2006 as stipulated in the Agreement and they would send the instrument of ratification shortly.

High mortality in retired soldiers

1665. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will **the** Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to a study, soldiers die early after they hang up their boots compared to Government servants who retire later and live longer;

(b) if so, the reasons cited for the above situation in the said study; and

(c) whether Government had constituted any expert committee to ascertain the reasons therefor and remedial measures?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) No study has been conducted by the Government to examine life expectancy of retired soldiers vis-a-vis average life of civilians.